



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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\*\*\***NEWS RELEASE**\*\*\*

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## Wisconsin becomes 21st Century Skills Leadership State

*State is third to join Partnership for 21st Century Skills*

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced today at the annual State Education Convention in Milwaukee that Wisconsin has become the third state in the nation to join the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

“We must ensure that all students graduate with the skills and knowledge needed for the 21st century. To become a partnership state is an exciting extension of our New Wisconsin Promise: our commitment to raise achievement for all students and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and their peers,” Burmaster said. “Our goal for every child in Wisconsin to graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to be productive citizens and lifelong learners in our 21st century global society parallels the partnership’s vision to renew and strengthen education.”

North Carolina and West Virginia were the first states to join the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Wisconsin’s initiative will collaborate with the partnership and involve PK-12 and higher education and business leaders in development of an action plan for updating model academic standards to include 21st century skills, developing 21st century skills assessments, and providing professional development so teachers imbed 21st century skills in their instructional practices.

Those 21st century skills are outlined in the partnership’s Framework for 21st Century Learning. In addition to knowledge in the core subjects of English/language arts and reading, mathematics, science, world languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history, and geography, the framework calls for 21st century content knowledge that includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health and wellness awareness. Learning and thinking skills,

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information and communications technology literacy, and life skills, such as leadership, adaptability, and self-direction, are to be included in authentic assessments of the full range of 21st century skills.

The framework developed from the collective vision of educators and employers of the skills that are most important for success in the workplace. The top four skills, which more than 400 employers across the United States considered lacking in all high school graduates and only adequate among college graduates, were

- professionalism/ work ethic,
- oral and written communication,
- teamwork/ collaboration, and
- critical thinking/ problem solving.

“We must ensure that our high school graduates have the skills required to be successful in the workplace either directly after high school or following their postsecondary studies,” Burmaster said. “The partnership’s strength is its emphasis on core academic preparation while acknowledging the importance of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and team work; skills that business and industry rank as very important for success in the global economy.”

Wisconsin’s application to the partnership calls for a review of the state’s model academic standards to ensure that they reflect the rigor demanded for the 21st century, include opportunities to develop knowledge and skill consistent with real-world application, and include the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century. The state will expand its PK-16 Leadership Council to include more business representation to ensure that businesses provide continuing advice on the skills they need from future employees. The plan calls for a review of state assessments and implementation of strong classroom assessments to ensure that students can demonstrate their mastery of 21st century skills. Additionally, the plan sets a goal for 2007 that every educator in the state to have some exposure to 21st century skills through a professional development activity. Beginning in 2006, Cooperative Educational Service Agency 1 formed a partnership of their local school districts and businesses in southeastern Wisconsin to work with the Partnership for 21st Century Schools and advance this effort.

“Wisconsin has a long history of pursuit of educational excellence that has established a foundation for many of the 21st century skills our students need,” Burmaster said. “Joining the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and working with Wisconsin business and education partners will

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help us strengthen education in Wisconsin with a curriculum that teaches 21st century skills, such as global awareness, financial literacy, collaboration and leadership skills, and information and communications technology literacy so our students are ready for the future,” Burmaster said.

Ken Kay, president of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, commended Wisconsin for prioritizing the 21st century learning outcomes its students need to become successful citizens and workers in our increasingly globally interconnected society. “Wisconsin is a national leader in the teaching of global awareness,” Kay said. “We look forward to working with Wisconsin’s leaders in expanding their expertise in this area into all the critical areas of 21st century skills. Today’s students need to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and effective communicators who are proficient in both core subjects and new 21st century skills. The partnership looks forward to working with the education, business and public policy leaders in the state to define a powerful vision for 21st century education.”

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emerged as the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child’s success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

Member organizations include Adobe Systems Incorporated, American Association of School Librarians, Apple, BellSouth Foundation, Cable in the Classroom, Cisco Systems, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Dell Incorporated, Discovery Education, Education Networks of America, EF Education, ETS, Ford Motor Company Fund, Intel Foundation, JA Worldwide™, LeapFrog SchoolHouse, McGraw-Hill Education, Microsoft Corporation, National Education Association, Oracle Education Foundation, Pearson Education, PolyVision, Riverdeep Incorporated, SAP, SAS, Texas Instruments, Thomson Gale, and Verizon. For additional information, visit < <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org> >.

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